

# THE BOSTON INFORMER

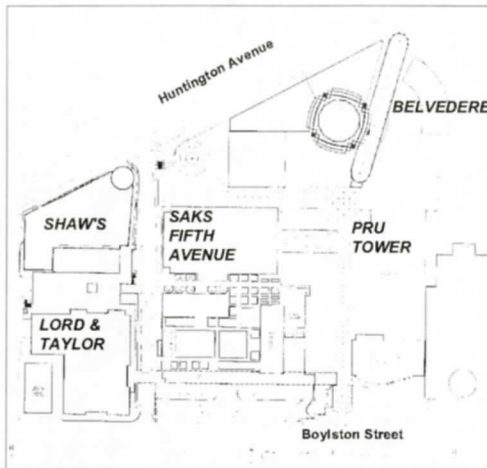
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The newsletter for people who care about Boston

May-June 2005

## Prudential Center Update

Boston's first modern mixed-use development in 1965, the Prudential Center ushered in the "New Boston." Twenty years later, Prudential Insurance proposed a 1 million s.f., \$500 million office development, replaced the next year by a 2.8 million s.f., \$1.1 billion residential proposal. Spurred by then-City Councillor David Scondras, Mayor Raymond



Flynn established the Prudential Project Advisory Committee, PruPAC, in 1987, to guide development. PruPAC was the first advisory committee established in the late 1980s and marked a major shift from traditional developer-based planning. The PruPAC approach stressed community participation in creating a set of guidelines for the redevelopment of the entire area. PruPAC helped direct development toward Huntington Avenue to make a two-sided plan.

The 1990 Prudential Center Redevelopment Development Plan featured five phases with a seven-year implementation plan. 1) 111 Huntington Ave. and retail expansion (covered mall); 2) Shaw's Supermarket; 3) 100 Belvedere Condomini-

ums; 4) 888 Boylston St. Office Building; and 5) Boylston East and West Housing.

The first three phases are done, the Office Building is approved but awaiting a tenant before beginning construction, and the final phase has been modified to incorporate a luxury hotel (Mandarin) within the planned housing component (scheduled completion fall 2007). The final phase also connects Lord & Taylor via enclosed bridge over Ring Road. Lord & Taylor facade improvements will be done by October. Boston Properties, which bought the complex in 2000, is exploring the feasibility of housing on Exeter Street.



Proposed Prudential Center development, 1960s.

Planning for the redevelopment of the unused railroad yards began in 1950, but didn't become real until Mayor John B. Hynes worked out a special tax formula with the new owners of the land, Prudential Insurance Co., in 1956. Although the original tax deal was nixed by the courts, Mayor John Collins declared the land "blighted" and entered into a Chapter 121A agreement with Prudential, exempting the corporation from taxes for 40 years—'til August 31, 2001. The original project was 5.3 million s.f. with 3,425 parking spaces.

Curiously, the Prudential Center design produced by a group of Boston architects that won an award and accolades by Progressive Architecture in 1954 was not the one built. A Los Angeles firm is to blame. "Where can you get the best view of Boston? From the Pru Tower, because you can't see the Pru!"

**Central Artery Under Scrutiny**—The U.S. House of Representatives Committee on Government Reform held a hearing in Boston in April on cost overruns and leaks in the Central Artery/Tunnel (CA/T) Project.

**Kenneth Mead, Inspector General, U.S. Department of Transportation, testimony (excerpt):**

- Formation in 1998 of an **Integrated Project Organization between Bechtel/Parsons Brinckerhoff (B/PB) and the CA/T** project hindered the CA/T project's ability to oversee B/PB and assign responsibility for errors because they are partners.
- The CA/T project has paid over \$2.13 billion in approved construction contract changes, and there are still **3,640 open claims totalling \$442 million**. It is unclear to what extent these changes were due to errors or omissions on the part of the design contractors; to date, B/PB has not been held liable for any.
- The Federal Highway Administration (FHWA) **has traditionally provided little oversight** of the billions of dollars it provides to states and municipalities each year, and the lack of oversight contributed significantly to the Central Artery problems. For example, when the project announced a \$1.4 billion cost increase in 2000, FHWA officials were caught unaware, even though they had just approved the Project's Finance Plan earlier that same day. And last year engineers held almost 40 percent of FHWA's 2,858 permanent positions, while financial specialists held less than 4 percent.

- **Leaks**—As of April 22, 2005, 102 defective or leaking slurry walls have been found (two major) and 400 of the total 1,937 wall panels have not been inspected. Roof-wall joint leaks are a major problem, as of April 22, 662 leaks had been found, but less than **one-half of the 9,125 roof-wall joints had been inspected**. The numbers are constantly changing as leaks are sealed with grouting and new ones emerge and old leaks reemerge.
- In March 1997 the CA/T project established a Waterproofing Task Force. In 2000, a **Leak Task Force** was formed.
- While the CA/T project says **its contractors and not the taxpayers will pay** to fix all the leaks, we are not entirely confident of this.

**U.S. Congressman Michael Capuano comments:**

The thin roof waterproofing membrane used has **only a five-year warranty**—is this appropriate for a tunnel with an expected life of 75–100 years, and who is responsible?

**MassPike Chairman Amorello testified:**

Operating costs of the Metropolitan Highway System will be \$76 million per year, of which **\$25 million is for the I-93 tunnels**.

**George Tamaro, Mueser Rutledge Consulting Engineers, testified:**

Slurry wall construction was developed in Italy in the 1950s and was first used in the United States at the World Trade Center in New York City. Regarding the I-93 tunnel roof leaks, "There is also a potential for corrosion at the roof girder connections. These connections are the main support of the roof system and will **require regular inspection and maintenance throughout the life of the tunnel.**"



## People Movers

**Rebecca Barnes**, from City of Boston chief planner to director of strategic growth at Brown University  
**Thomas Tinlin** to interim head of the Boston Transportation Dept.  
**John Coglian**, from MassHighway commissioner to Executive Office of Transportation (EOT) secretary  
**Luisa Paiewonsky**, from assistant secretary of EOT to MassHighway commissioner  
**Sue Burt** to R.D. Kimball Engineers  
**Paul Burgé**, from Acentech Incorporated to URS Corp., San Diego.  
**Tom Doolittle**, from HNTB Corporation to Sasaki Associates  
**Lynn Ahlgren** to EOT Transit  
**Bill Schwartz**, from Louis Berger Group to Neighborhood America  
**Doug Kelleher**, formerly at VHB to Epsilon Associates  
**Richard Leary** is the new head of MBTA Bus Operations  
**Nancy Brennan** is the first executive director of the Rose F. Kennedy Greenway  
**Michael Mulhern**, from MBTA general manager to Jacobs Engineering  
**Daniel Grabauskas**, from EOT secretary to MBTA general manager  
**Scott Darling**, from Conservation Law Foundation to legal counsel at the MBTA  
**Etty Padmodipoetro** of Stull and Lee will be a Loeb Fellow at the Harvard Graduate School of Design in September.  
**Edmund Toomey**, from president, New England Aquarium, to chief operating officer, Lesley University, Cambridge  
**James Hunt III**, from assistant secretary of the Executive Office of Environmental Affairs to City of Boston chief of Environmental and Energy Services.  
**John Weber** is the Boston Harbor regional coordinator for the Office of Coastal Zone Management.  
**George Brice**, from superintendent of Boston Harbor Islands to acting superintendent of the Cape Cod National Seashore.  
**Eric Kriss** will be leaving in early fall as state secretary of Administration and Finance. Future plans not announced.

**1 Garden Under Glass (Darwin Project)** on the Rose Fitzgerald Kennedy Greenway suffered another setback when the two planning specialists, Linda and Jonathan Haar, terminated their contracts in May 2005 with the Garden Under Glass, Inc., a subsidiary of Mass. Horticultural Society, saying they are owed \$476,793 in salary and expenses. In addition, they said the Massachusetts Turnpike Authority (MassPike), owners of the three parcels near Dewey Square that have been slated for this project for 15 years, had not given them a clear designation for rights to build the proposed botanical garden. A senior MassPike official told The Boston Informer that MassPike had not given up on the project, even though it might take 10–15 years to raise money and come to fruition.

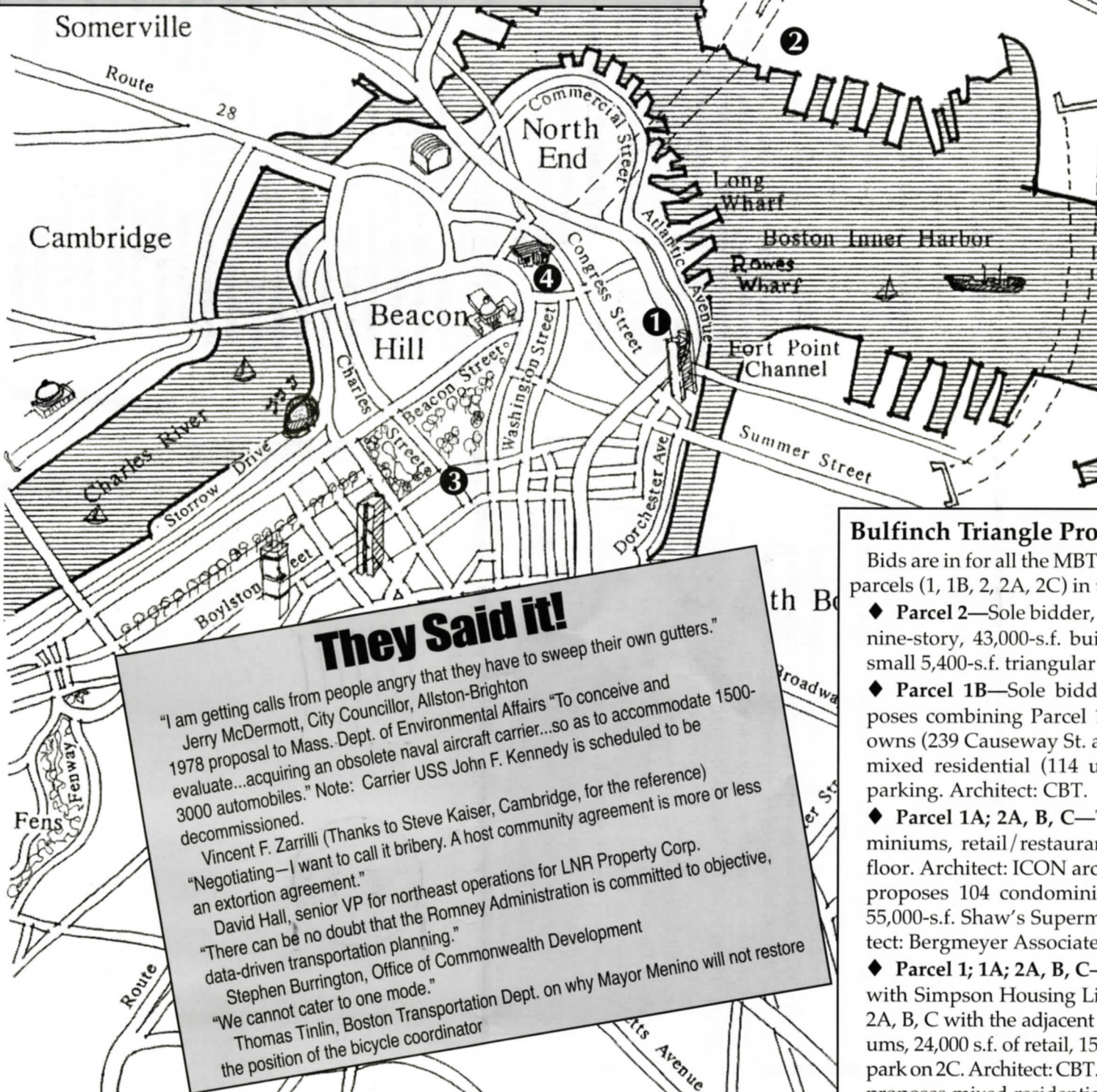
In the meantime, it was anticipated the parcels would become informal parks with unusual plantings from the Massachusetts Horticultural Society and other resources.

**2 Construction Begins on Runway 14/32 at Logan Airport** – After 32 years of protests and litigation, controversial Runway 14/32 is under construction. The new runway should be completed by 2006 and will have a list of restrictions attached: it can be used in only one direction (over water); when winds are greater than 12 m.p.h. from the northwest or southeast; and that peak pricing for landings at Logan must be implemented.

**3 MBTA Silver Line** – The MBTA's federal and state Supplemental Environmental Impact document for the Silver Line Phase III project is on public review (comments due August 8). Unlike many MBTA projects, no preferred alternative is identified for connecting the Washington Street and So. Boston Silver Line services. The report describes four alignments for a portal/tunnel segment to connect to a proposed "core tunnel segment" and station. The "core tunnel" would run from So. Station to Charles Street So. and would feature a new bus station under Boylston station on the Green Line and a new station under Chinatown station.

Buses would arrive at this "core tunnel" from one of three tunnels in South Cove or from a tunnel under Columbus Avenue at the Salvation Army building. The MBTA plans to have a bus depart from the new Boylston Under station every 49 seconds, providing service to So. Station, Seaport District, Logan Airport, Dalton Street (Back Bay) and So. End/Dudley Square every 5 to 10 minutes. No kidding.

**4 City Hall Plaza** – Just when you thought plans to "revitalize" City Hall Plaza were dead, Thomas Keane reported in the Boston Society of Architects May/June issue of ArchitectureBoston mag that architect Henry Wood and landscape architect Bill Pressley are working "to champion a new revitalization plan." The Boston Informer contacted Pressley to see what they have come up with and for whom they are working, but there was no comment. Keane's insightful article chronicled attempts since 1993 to do something about the vast red brick desert of City Hall Plaza.



## Bulfinch Triangle Proposals

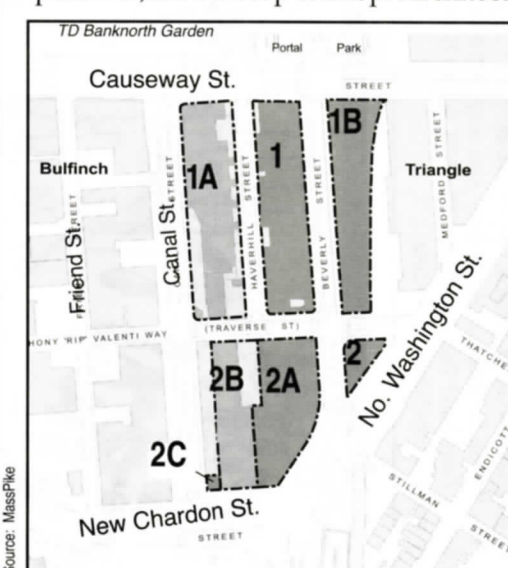
Bids are in for all the MBTA (1A, 2B) and MassPike development parcels (1, 1B, 2, 2A, 2C) in the Bulfinch Triangle at North Station.

◆ **Parcel 2**—Sole bidder, Sal Tecce of the North End, proposes a nine-story, 43,000-s.f. building with 24 condominiums for the small 5,400-s.f. triangular site. Architect: CBT.

◆ **Parcel 1B**—Sole bidder, Boston Development Corp., proposes combining Parcel 1B with adjacent buildings it already owns (239 Causeway St. and 198 N. Washington St.) to develop mixed residential (114 units) retail, office and/or hotel and parking. Architect: CBT.

◆ **Parcel 1A; 2A, B, C**—Trinity Financial proposes 200 condominiums, retail/restaurant, 118 parking spaces on the second floor. Architect: ICON architecture. **For parcels 2A, B, C**, Trinity proposes 104 condominiums and 100 parking spaces plus a 55,000-s.f. Shaw's Supermarket with 150 parking spaces. Architect: Bergmeyer Associates.

◆ **Parcel 1; 1A; 2A, B, C**—Hynes Raymond LLC in partnership with Simpson Housing Limited Partnership propose to combine 2A, B, C with the adjacent Terracotta Building for 176 condominiums, 24,000 s.f. of retail, 15,000 s.f. of office, plus a 1,500-s.f. pocket park on 2C. Architect: CBT. **For parcels 1 and 1A**, Simpson Housing proposes mixed residential (500 rental units) 315 parking spaces, plus a 40,000-s.f. Stop & Shop. Architect: ADD Inc.



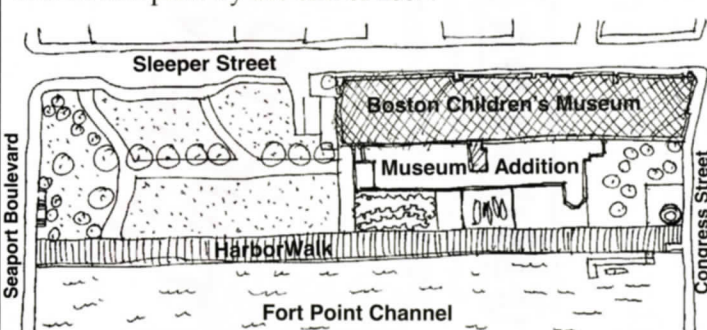
Bulfinch Triangle Development Parcels

Unfortunately for neighbors who have been demanding a supermarket, the two supermarket proposals were the lower bidders for the MBTA parcels 1A and 2B, and the MBTA has somewhat inflexible rules requiring it to accept the highest bidder. A solution might be worked out.

The proposals will go to the respective Boards in July.

## Children's Museum Expansion

The Children's Museum recently outlined plans to expand and renovate its facility on the Fort Point Channel in an Environmental Notification Form filed with the state. Plans include building a three-story, 22,300-s.f. addition on the channel side of the existing six-story, 150,000-s.f. building. The additions would house a number of new exhibits and activities plus a "healthy food" and retail space. The wharf area between the building and Fort Point Channel will be renovated with tables and benches, colored paving and space for exhibits and events. The \$25 million project is expected to begin in spring 2006 and be complete by the end of 2007.



The new wharf area would connect with the new Children's Wharf Park on the north side being built by the MBTA as part of the mitigation for Silver Line construction.

Architect: Cambridge Seven Associates, Inc., with Michael Van Valkenburgh Associates, Inc., landscape architect.



## Welcome to The Boston Informer

The goal is simple: provide concise public information on construction projects, planning initiatives, and whatever else affects living and working in Boston. Welcome to *The Boston Informer*!

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*"We cannot grout our way out of roof leaks."  
Attorney General Thomas Reilly*

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## You Were Asking

- Q.** I noticed the new Terminal A at Logan Airport has many bicycle racks out front. Who is expected to use these since riding on airport roadways is prohibited (and enforced)?
- A.** Good question. Maybe they expect hordes of employees to start taking their bikes on the shuttle buses, which is permitted, so they can lock them at the terminal...?
- Q.** Is it true that an Armenian Memorial Fountain is going to be installed on Parcel 13 on the Rose Fitzgerald Kennedy Greenway in the North End?
- A.** Yes. It is somewhat ironic that the only major ethnic symbol on the North End section of the Greenway will be Armenian.
- Q.** The plaque at the new Airport Blue Line station lists "Secretary of the Office of Commonwealth Development (OCD)" Douglas Foy. I thought he was called "OCD chief," not secretary.
- A.** Should be. Since the legislature declined to make OCD a cabinet-level agency, OCD is technically a only a bureau or division, not an executive department, and Foy is the chief or head. We couldn't even find OCD in the Blue Pages of the telephone book.
- Q.** Why is recruiting volunteers for the various Rose Fitzgerald Kennedy Greenway Conservancy committees being done in secrecy?
- A.** Perhaps in the hope of finding recruits unbiased and free from any knowledge of the design and prior history of the Greenway.
- Q.** Is there an Irish Heritage Trail in Boston?
- A.** Yes. The Irish Heritage Trail starts at the Rose Kennedy Rose Garden in Christopher Columbus Park and winds through 22 stops in Boston Proper, Charlestown, East Boston and Dorchester, ending at the JFK Library and Museum. For more information see [www.irishheritagetrail.com](http://www.irishheritagetrail.com).

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**TIME TO  
RENEW**

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